NOAA 99-R329
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Pat Viets
12/13/99

CONTRACTS AWARDED FOR PRELIMINARY DESIGN OF ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE SYSTEM OF THE FUTURE, NOAA ANNOUNCES

Two contracts valued at $20,650,000 each have been awarded to two companies in California for work that will improve short-term weather forecasts and long-term climate prediction, U.S. Commerce Secretary William M. Daley announced today.

The companies, Lockheed Martin Missiles and Space of Sunnyvale, Calif., and TRW Space and Electronics Group of Redondo Beach, Calif., will conduct system architecture trades, preliminary system design, and data processing demonstrations for the nation's polar-orbiting environmental satellites of the future. The contracts have been awarded on behalf of the tri-agency National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System.

The NPOESS program is a key element of Vice President Gore's National Performance Review initiative aimed at making government less costly, more efficient, and more responsive to public needs. Daley said the NPOESS program, once operational in the next decade, will save the taxpayers about $1.8 billion over its lifetime. The savings will accrue as a result of the administration's initiative to combine the nation's military and civilian environmental satellite programs into a single, national system that will satisfy both civil and national security requirements for space-based, remotely sensed environmental data.

"The new satellites will improve short-term weather forecasts and long-term climate prediction," Daley said. "These contract awards mark a major milestone in the NPOESS development. The NPOESS program marks the most significant change in U.S. operational remote sensing since the launch of the first weather satellite in 1960, and we are pleased that Lockheed-Martin and TRW have committed to aggressively pursue definition of the total NPOESS system."

The contracts were awarded Dec. 13 by the tri-agency Integrated Program Office, which consists of components of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Defense and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Under the Firm-Fixed Price Program Definition and Risk Reduction contracts, each contractor will conduct system architecture trades, system requirements definition, and preliminary design of the four major NPOESS segments: Space, Integrated Data Processing, Command, Control and Communications, and Launch Support. In addition, Lockheed Martin and TRW will conduct demonstrations of their ability to provide the data processing segment. After successful completion of these efforts, the NPOESS Integrated Program Office will conduct a source selection in 2002 to determine the prime contractor that will build and deploy the total NPOESS program.

Each contractor will also plan to support the NPOESS Preparatory Project, a joint IPO/NASA mission that is currently planned for launch in late 2005. The NPP mission serves a dual purpose of providing on-orbit risk reduction for NPOESS operational sensors and ground data processing, while ensuring continuity of advanced atmospheric and oceanic imaging and sounding data by "bridging" between the NASA Earth Observing System research missions early in the next decade and the NPOESS operational missions that will begin late in the next decade. Each contractor will plan to provide the Command, Control and Communications and Integrated Data Processing segments for NPP, while maximizing commonality for the future NPOESS operational system.

"By combining our risk reduction program with NASA's environmental remote sensing needs, we are better able to realize true on-orbit testing prior to beginning operations, while still providing operational science data for NOAA and NASA. By cooperating with NASA on the NPP mission, the Integrated Program Office will have a more robust risk reduction program for NPOESS than if we tried to go it alone. This is a true benefit of our converged programs," said John D. Cunningham, who is system program director of the NPOESS Integrated Program Office.

Earlier this year, contracts were awarded to Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corporation of Boulder, Colo., for the development of an Ozone Mapping and Profiler Suite instrument to improve the accuracy of Earth's ozone measurements, and to ITT Industries, ITT Aerospace/Communications Division of Ft. Wayne, Ind., for the development of a Cross-track Infrared Sounder to provide high spectral resolution measurements of the vertical distribution of temperature, moisture and pressure in the atmosphere. These contracts will be followed by others next year for development of advanced imaging sensors for NPOESS. The NPOESS sensor suites will deliver higher resolution and more accurate atmospheric, oceanographic, terrestrial, and solar-geophysical data to support improved accuracy in short-term weather forecasts and warnings and severe storm warnings. They will also serve the data continuity requirements of the climate community for improved climate prediction and assessment and environmental monitoring.

The 1994 Presidential Decision Directive that established the NPOESS Integrated Program Office charged NOAA with overall responsibility for the converged system, as well as satellite operations and interactions with the civil and international user communities. The Department of Defense has the lead responsibility for major systems acquisitions, including launch support. NASA has primary responsibility for facilitating the development and incorporation of new cost-effective technologies into the converged system. Representatives from NOAA, DOD, and NASA participated in the NPOESS PD&RR source selection, which was held in Silver Spring, Md.